

VI. *A Letter to Dr. Halley, Astronomer Royal, R. S. Soc. in answer to some Objections made to the History of the Antiquity of the Venereal Disease. By Mr. Beckett, Surgeon, F. R. S.*

*S I R,*

I Was of opinion that what I had said in my two former Letters, had been so full and satisfactory that I should have had no occasion to have given my self or any body else, any farther trouble upon this head: But forasmuch as I find there have been two Objections made against what I have advanced by one or two learned Gentlemen, I shall take upon me to answer them, and endeavour to prove they do not in the least invalidate the Authorities I before produced. The first is, that the *Venereal Disease* so well known among us now, and the *Leprosy* of former Ages, could not be the same Disease, because the *Leprosy* is not to be conquered by Salivation, which the other generally very readily yields to. In answer to this, I am to observe, that the *Leprosy*, which we have among us at this time, affects only the surface of the Body, the Skin generally appears scaley, with a certain deep red colour, or small Sores upon removing the Scales, and sometimes a Scabbiness, with a redness of the Skin, which affects different parts of the Body. I have known both the Cheeks only affected, both the Arms for the breadth of the Palm of the Hand, sometimes the Breast, the Legs, and other Parts; but this may continue upon the Patient during his Life, as it frequently does, and never make any farther Progress; which

which shews it to be a cuticular Disease: In these Cases upon Salivating the Patients, the Scales generally fall off, the redness disappears, and the Cure shall seem to be compleated: but in a Month or two, the same inconveniencies generally attend them as before. But one ought not to conclude, that because our *Leprosy* will but rarely be cured by Salivation, and the *Pox* generally will, that many of those Persons the Ancients judged to be *Leprous*, were not really *Venercal*; for their *Leprosy*, as they call'd it, was a quite different Disease from ours. Had there been any Proof brought that Persons had been Salivated in their *Leprosy*, and failed of Cure, it would have determin'd the Case; but on the contrary, we are assured by the learned Dr. *Pitcairn*, in his Dissertation concerning the Ingress of the *Lues Venerea*, That the *Leprosy*, before the *Neapolitan* Disease was talk'd of, was cured by *Mercury*, and now since it changed its Name, it is no longer heard of. Thus we find that their *Leprosy* and our *Venercal Disease* would be cured by the same Method, but their *Leprosy* and ours, being absolutely different Diseases, we by no means ought to expect the Success, from the same process of Cure, should be the same. I dare be positive that no body ever observed our *Leprosy* to be attended with falling of the Hair, hoarseness of the Voice, the Patient speaking as though he spoke through the Nose, Consumption of the Flesh, Ulcers all over the Body, corruption of the fleshy Parts, and of the Bones themselves, filthy Ulcers of the Throat, corrosion and falling of the Nose, all which are reckon'd as Symptoms of their *Leprosy*; on the contrary, ours is a mild and almost inoffensive Disease, which a Person may be affected with during his Life, and never become worse; whereas the other by displaying it self under

the Symptoms before enumerated, brings the Patient to the most miserable end; besides this, their Disease was got by Coition as their Authors assure us, but in our *Leprosy*, a diseased Husband may cohabit with his Wife as long as he lives, and he shall never be able either by Coition, or the immediate contact of the diseased Parts with those that are sound, to communicate any Evil. Had what our Predecessors called the *Leprosy* been the same Disease we call by that Name now, they had not been so solicitous of making such large Provision for them, or shutting them up from Humane Society; for one of our *Leprous* Persons might have been among them, and no body have known he laboured under any Infirmary at all. From hence it is evident the Disease so common among them, was entirely different from our *Leprosy*, the Appearances of which bear no manner of Analogy with the former: 'Tis from the Symptoms of the Disease, and the manner of its being received, that we generally know one Disease from another; but the Symptoms of most of their *Leprous* Persons, and the manner whereby the Disease was gotten, will be found in no other Disease that attacks the humane Body, but in the *Venercal Disease* only; for here they so exactly agree, that we must in a manner do violence to our own Reason, if we deny them to be the same. I proceed now to answer the second Objection, which indeed was long ago falsely asserted by Dr. *Fuller* the Historian; which is, that the *Leprosy* was brought into *England* from the Holy War, by some of our Countrymen, and that the Disease was altogether unknown among us before. This, as I take it, does not so immediately concern me, since all I take upon me to prove is, that what *They* called the *Leprosy*, is not the same Disease we call by that Name now, but another.

another. However, I shall in a few Words make it appear that this Objection is likewise groundless, by observing that the first *Englishmen* that went over to the Holy War, made their first Voyage in the Year 1096, as our Historians generally agree, and that some of them returned in 1098, two Years after that Expedition: but most certain it is, we had the *Leprosy* among us before, for *Wharton, de Episcopis Londinensibus*, and other Historians assure us, that *Hugo de Orivalle*, one of the Bishops of *London*, died here of the *Leprosy* in the Year 1084, which proves our Countrymen did not bring that Disease first from the Holy War, because we had it among us before. The account *William of Malmesbury* gives of this Bishop's Disease, is as follows. *Is post p. ucos ordinationis annos in mortuum incurabilem incidit. Siquidem regia Valetudo totum corpus ejus purulentis ulceribus occupans ad pudendum remedium transmisit. Nam credens asserentibus unicum fore subsidium si vasa humorum receptacula, verenda scilicet, excrucantur, non abnuvit. Itaque & opprobrium spadonis tulit Episcopus, & nullum invenit remedium, quoad vixit leprosus.* Now its highly probable, had this been a new Disease the Bishop died of, the mention of it as such, would not have escaped our Historian, but on the contrary it seems to have been anciently known among us, because the Remedy made use of for it was so, it having been recommended by *Ætius*, and other Physical Writers several hundred Years before this time; and I think its very plain that the cutting off the *Testicles*, and with them the Vessels formed for the receiving the Humours as expressed in the former Case, was by them looked upon to be of peculiar Service, because its probable that observing the Disease to begin in these and the neighbouring Parts, they thought the very *Minera Mortis*, would.

would be by this means destroyed, and the Disease either cured or the spreading of it prevented.

*I am, S I R,*

*Yours, &c.*

William Beckett.

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VII. *An Experiment to compare the Paris Weights as they are now us'd at Paris, with the English Weights. By the Reverend J. T. Desaguliers, LL.D. F. R. S.*

**F**inding the Accounts which we have of the *French* Weights different in different Books, I sent to a curious Gentleman for some *Paris* Weights exact to the Standard Weights at the *Chatelet*; and found upon tryal, the *Paris* Ounce, which contains 576 of their Grains, to be equal to 476 of our Grains Troy; from which Experiment all the other Proportions may be deduc'd.

The *French* Pound cont. 16 Ounces.

Ounce — 8 Drams, or 576 *Paris* Grains.

Dram — 3 Deniers.

Denier — 24 Grains.

VIII. *Some*